



## THE BISHOP OF NORTH CAROLINA

January 8, 2020

Grace and peace to you, our sisters and brothers in Christ,

We are writing to share with you news of an initiative in the Diocese to address pastorally the reality of sexual abuse, harassment, and misconduct in the Church.

It is our great joy as your bishops to serve among those called to “guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the Church” and to “be in all things a faithful pastor and wholesome example for the entire flock of Christ.” (BCP 517) Included in our calling is our duty to serve before God “day and night in the ministry of reconciliation”. (BCP 521)

As the bishops of the Diocese of North Carolina we are charged to guard the faith and guide the church in the light of God’s reconciling love. We believe the metaphor of shepherd associated with ordination of bishops indicates we have a call to protect and defend those in our care from all evil, including the misuse of power. This call is shared by the entire community of the baptized, but with particular demands upon bishops to tend to the injured and address the impact of the harm.

Despite all efforts to the contrary, at times members of our One Body have been wounded in word and deed in body and in spirit by other members of the One Body. Among us are victims of sexual abuse, harassment and misconduct. Where one is wounded we are all wounded. Harassment of any magnitude, abuse of any kind, leaves wounds and how such wounds are tended matters to the health of the entire body.

With this in mind we have asked our diocesan Pastoral Response Team (PRT) to follow in the steps of the 2018 General Convention and provide a listening process for our diocese that leads to a Liturgy of Repentance and Reconciliation on Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2020.

Over the next few months the PRT will host confidential listening circles, inviting clergy and lay church professionals/employees who have suffered from sexual misconduct, abuse, or harassment, in or outside of the church, to share their stories of how this trauma has impacted their lives. Your bishops will be available for all of these circles, unless we discern a desire to meet without a bishop. We anticipate three to four circles to take place between Epiphany and Easter. The PRT has developed a careful, thoughtful process, [details of which](#) are to be found on the [initiative webpage](#).

In addition to these listening circles and in early 2020, we will invite letters from any members of our diocese who wish to share their personal accounts of suffering from sexual abuse and misconduct and in particular how this has impacted their lives and faith journeys. These letters will be kept in confidence, shared within a small circle of pastoral care providers, and shared with the bishops with or without names according to the wishes of the submitter. We will respond pastorally and as sensitively as possible to each letter.

The objective of receiving such letters is three-fold. First, it is important that your bishops hear and appreciate narratives that describe the impact of abuse and misconduct in your lives. Secondly, just as was designed at the 2018 General Convention, we will ask some of the letter writers if they would like to have their letters to be read at a Diocesan Liturgy of Repentance and Healing planned for May 2<sup>nd</sup>. When such letters are read, it will be without names or reference to any particularities that might reveal specific people, places or occasions. Finally, it is our hope that the act of sharing such accounts provides the narrator some small amount of balm that the bishops of the diocese have heard and share the enduring impact of these wounds.

This effort, to have both Listening Circles and a letter-writing process leading to a Liturgy of Repentance and Healing, is only the start of a process to understand and work pastorally with the wounds in our Church resulting from sexual abuse, misconduct and harassment. We ask for your prayers.

Please [refer to our webpage](#) to learn more about the process and how to participate, should you feel so inclined.

God bless and keep you,

Faithfully,



The Rt. Rev. Samuel S. Rodman  
Bishop Diocesan



The Rt. Rev. Anne E. Hodges-Copple  
Bishop Suffragan